
WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

Waukegan Park District and City of Waukegan Celebrate Jack Benny's Birthday

Waukegan, Illinois (February 9, 2021) – The Waukegan Park District and City of Waukegan invite the community to celebrate Jack Benny's 88th "39th" Birthday and Valentine's Day with a card shower. Starting on Friday, February 12, individuals can tie a card to a tree, bush, and the fence at Jack Benny Plaza, located at the southwest corner of Genesee Street and Clayton Street in Downtown Waukegan.

Jack Benny, born on February 14, 1894, was a comedic icon in the entertainment world, with a highly successful career in radio, television, and movies. Benny grew up in Waukegan, where he began his journey to stardom by playing the violin in local vaudeville theatres and school orchestras.

39 is a symbolic number associated with Jack Benny, as he decided to be 39 years old forever. The running joke got started the year after Benny celebrated his "first" 39th birthday on air in 1933. Fans were amused, and the Jack Benny Program celebrated Benny's "39th" birthday every year.

After leaving Waukegan as an eighteen-year-old to follow his dreams of becoming an entertainer, Jack Benny never forgot his hometown. To this day, Waukegan honors their "favorite son" through numerous tributes including the City of Waukegan's Jack Benny Plaza, Waukegan Park District's Jack Benny Center for the Arts, 39 Jack Benny Drive in Bowen Park, and Waukegan Public School's Jack Benny Middle School, home of the 39ers and the only school in the country named after a comedian.

Participants are asked to post a photo of their card(s) on Facebook, tag the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, and use the hashtag #JacksCardShower. Waukegan Park District staff will collect the cards on or before Monday, February 22, depending on the weather. More details are available at waukeganparks.org/jackbenny.

About the Waukegan Park District

Established on December 26, 1916, the district has 50 properties and more than 740 acres of land, including the 18-hole Bonnie Brook and 9-hole Greenshire Golf Courses. Properties are managed to the highest environmental and conservation standards. Facilities operated by the district include the Field House Sports, Fitness and Aquatics Center, the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, the Waukegan's Greg Petry SportsPark, the Waukegan Skate Park, the Waukegan BMX Track, recreational centers, disc golf course, dog exercise area and agility course, outdoor sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, splash pads, and sports courts including basketball, tennis and pickleball. A full range of programs and services are offered year-round for all ages, from infants to seniors as well as special needs populations. Healthy lifestyles, wellness initiatives, and a connection with the outdoors and nature are integrated throughout programs, services, and

special events. Cultural events are provided by the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus, and the Waukegan History Museum. There is something for everyone! The District is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), and Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA). The District employs 63 full-time and over 230 part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees and is recognized by the IPRA as an Exceptional Workplace. Accreditation is maintained from the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Distinguished Agency Accreditation and Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA). The District has received Government Finance Officer Association awards for Distinguished Budget Presentation and Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting for eight consecutive years. The District was awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013 and named a NRPA Gold Medal Finalist in 2012, 2013, and 2019.

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